Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan Revision Public Information & Scoping Meeting July 30, 2011

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Okanogan County Fairgrounds, Agriplex Building, Okanogan, WA

#### **Meeting Purpose and Overview**

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) hosted a public information and scoping meeting for the Colville and Okanogan National Forest Plan in Okanogan, Washington on July 30, 2011. The meeting provided a combination of formats, including open house, presentation, question and response, and group comments. Approximately twenty-eight members of the public attended the meeting.

The meeting served two purposes: to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the Forest Service's proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, and to provide information on how the public can comment on the proposals, how their comments will be used, and to learn about future opportunities for their involvement.

## **Meeting Agenda**

Susan Hayman, Envirolssues facilitator, welcomed everyone and explained the meeting objectives, agenda, and meeting conduct. Dale Olson, Okanogan-Wenatchee District Ranger, talked briefly about the Forest Plan Revision process, the value and use of comments and balancing various user needs, and Forest Service's expectations for the meeting. Dale introduced the rest of the Forest Service's Forest Plan Revision team.

#### Presentation

Margaret Hartzell, Team leader, presented the key concepts of the Proposed Actions. Since this meeting was held in Okanogan, Margaret focused on the specific proposals related to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. She provided a general overview; a process timeline; and *new* and *continued* goals of the Proposed Actions for the following categories:

- Aquatics and riparian systems
- Plants
- Vegetation
- Wildlife habitat
- Access
- Livestock grazing
- Recreation
- Renewable forest products

- Scenery
- Preliminary Wilderness recommendations

Margaret also explained the "tools" the plan uses, as well as how comments are being gathered and used in the process. Please see Attachment 1 for the presentation slides.

#### Questions & Answers (Q&A)

The following is a synopsis of questions (Q), comments (C) and corresponding responses (R) from the meeting. This is not intended to be a verbatim transcription of this portion of the meeting; similar questions / concerns were combined for summarization purposes.

# Q: How does snowmobiling fit into the definition of "backcountry"?

R: Changes in winter motorized recreation are not addressed in these Proposed Actions.

Backcountry -Motorized use applies only to summer motorized uses; existing winter motorized across the forest can continue as currently authorized.

#### Q: Could you explain what "scope the project" means?

R: Scope is a word that is used in the NEPA process primarily. Scope refers to the "bounds" of the project – for example, what geographic area a project covers; activities or uses on the forest – the project addresses / makes decisions about. A site-specific project in a district may be limited to a prescribed area (such as for a prescribed burn) and how the project (burn) will occur. Here, the plan scope is for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, including broad, general, strategic direction – standards and guidelines to design for projects.

# Q: What goes into 1 year or more of analysis, related to scoping?

R: This relates to public involvement, as part of the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. We must involve the public, and describe what we are proposing to do and the potential environmental consequences of the project. There are regulations about the length of comment periods. Comments are also encouraged via email, mail, phone, and through the website.

C/Q: One-third of all state lands fall under the Wilderness Act – non-motorized. You are proposing to add 3% of over 1 million acres. Are you proposing to eliminate 1 million acres of land for motorized travel?

R: To clarify, the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest currently has about 1,470,000 acres designated as Wilderness. The entire forest is over 4 million acres. We are proposing to add 125,800 additional acres of Wilderness. Before Congress acts, existing uses can continue. If and when Congress passes legislation, motorized uses could no longer continue unless specifically accepted in the legislation. Modes of travel within the Wilderness area are on foot or horse. We tried to avoid areas that have designated motorized trails in the wilderness proposals.

# Q: How much of the proposed 125,800 acres was already in buffer zone? How can we get more buffer zone? Will there be more?

R: When Congress enacts legislation to designate Wilderness, there will be no such thing as a "buffer" around Wilderness areas. The Forest Service has been told that they will not manage any area as "buffer." We would be happy to talk about this more in the focused discussion groups.

#### Q/C: Did you extend the comment period? Did you give 30 days when asked for 60?

R: Yes, 30 days were added to the comment period. A number of public requests were made to extend the deadline. We decided to give an additional 30 days, for a total of 90 days. You now have until September 28 to submit comments.

Q/C: Why is the Forest Service recommending more acres for Wilderness? We already have over 1 million. No one can go in there to maintain them, especially with Forest Service budget cuts. You cannot go in with chainsaws to maintain them [in Wilderness areas].

R: In general, we look at availability, capability, and need. Capability refers to improving the boundaries of existing wilderness to make it easier to manage. Also, public comment suggested more acres be recommended for Wilderness. This is a compromise among many interests. We can discuss this in more detail in the discussion groups (Reference Forest Service Handbook, 1909.12, Chapter 70, Wilderness Evaluation).

# Q: How many miles of trails does the Forest Service have on the Forest? How much do you maintain?

R: We don't have those numbers right now, but we would be happy to get this information to you later. This is not directly related to the Proposed Actions. As an indication, the Methow Valley Ranger District (in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest) has about 1200 miles of trail in the system, and maintains about 600 miles annually.

Q: Can you describe each of the Management Areas proposed? Can you talk about the intention behind establishing different Management Areas, especially Backcountry and Backcountry-Motorized instead of being put into Wilderness? Are you still trying to preserve

# the quality of roadless areas? Are you trying to maintain security and habitat for wildlife there?

R: This would take some time to explain. Let's get together for greater detail in the open house following the discussion groups. One thing worth noting is that Backcountry Non-Motorized (a.k.a. Backcountry) does not allow summertime motorized use. However, this use could continue in Active Restoration areas 2 and 3. Those areas where winter motorized use is currently authorized, would be allowed to continue. For Backcountry-Motorized, summer and winter motorized use would continue as is. Yes, we are trying to maintain the quality of existing roadless areas as well as security and habitat for wildlife.

# C: It seems that you're talking about allowing no roads -- No roads between Republic and Kettle Falls.

R: The areas we consider for Wilderness recommendation started out as inventoried roadless areas. We eliminated roaded and logged areas from these areas. Non-system roads are excluded by definition for Wilderness consideration. Old jeep/ mine roads may be managed as four-wheel-drive trails; they may be included in areas considered for Wilderness evaluation. We don't recall that any, or many, of those areas with roads were recommended as Wilderness. We always welcome more information, if you have any to provide.

Q: Have there been any studies on what is being used currently as Wilderness and the use of multi-purpose land? Is this factor considered when proposing additional Wilderness? Can you talk about use in Wilderness and non-Wilderness?

R: Yes, our recreation availability assessment looked at all of the potential Wilderness areas we studied, and considered how these areas contribute regionally. The assessment considers mountain biking, snowmobiling, etc. It also asks where users are coming from – and how many. Many areas were excluded based on that alone. We also understand the high-use areas and consider population growth trends and expected recreational use.

# Q: Based on the assessment, what percentage of people using the Forest are using Wilderness lands?

R: We would have to convert the numbers to a percentage. We can discuss this with you in greater detail during the open house session following the discussion groups.

C/Q: There's an increase in Wilderness percentage proposed. But, you said that the most popular use of the forest is scenery / driving. How is the plan balanced, given the proposed Wilderness designation? An increase of 125,000 acres is an increase of what percentage?

R: The 3% Wilderness refers to 3% of the whole 4 million forest acres of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. <u>Nationally</u>, scenery / driving is the most popular use of national forests. <u>Locally</u>, on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, the most popular uses are: 1) hiking and walking (29% of visitors); 2) fishing; 3) cross-county skiing; 4) horseback riding (most in the region, by far); 5) relaxing; 6) viewing wildlife... snowmobiling was a lot lower percentage (less than 6.2%). The Forest Service considers all activities important.

C/Q: You said grassroots [groups] want more Wilderness. How did you work with the counties – especially if county government did not want more Wilderness? The Forest Service legally has to work with county governments.

R: Moving toward a proposal over the years, Ferry and Okanogan County commissioners expressed wanting to limit Wilderness expansion entirely. It is important to consider where we are in the process. It is a proposal – there is room to change. We want to get the reaction from the public. Likely, county commissioners will continue with the position that they do not want to see additional Wilderness acres in the county. We have met with them twice in this phase of the project and discussed the Proposed Actions. We will continue to meet with them as requested.

Susan explained that after a short break, everyone would be breaking into focused discussion groups, where attendees would be able to have more detailed conversations about the various topics – Vegetation Management; Wilderness Recommendations; Recreation; and Riparian and Wildlife Habitat.

She explained that attendees could choose to sit with up to three of the four discussion groups, for rotating 20-minute discussion sessions. Each group had a facilitator to capture high-level flip chart notes, to be incorporated into the meeting summary. Please see Attachment 2 for the transcribed flip chart notes.

#### Closing

Susan noted that the formal discussion group sessions were over, but Forest Service staff would be available for further discussion and to answer any remaining questions.

Margaret and Mike Liu thanked everyone for their participation in the process, noting that their input will be helpful in developing plans in the future. They also encouraged everyone to continue to ask questions in the remaining time and to submit written comments by September 28.

The open house reconvened for another 30 minutes. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

## **WELCOME!**

**COLVILLE AND OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST PLAN REVISION** 

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND **SCOPING MEETING** 

July 30, 2011

Okanogan, Washington

#### Agenda

9:00 a.m. Open House

9:30 a.m. Welcome and Meeting Overview

9:40 a.m. Informational Presentation,

Questions and Responses

10:30 a.m. Discussion Groups 12:00 p.m. Open House

12:30 p.m. Adjourn

NEWZ Plan Revision

#### Meeting Principles

- □ Participate actively
- ☐ Discuss concerns in a constructive and civil manner
- ☐ Share question and response time
- □ Please hold applause
- □ Turn off/mute electronic devices
- Let the facilitators or Forest Service Staff know if you need help finding something, or someone to talk with you.
- ☐ The FS will genuinely try to answer, as specifically as possible, any questions about the proposed actions and how they may affect your interest(s) on the Colville or Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests.

NEWZ Plan Revision

#### Informational Presentation

Margaret Hartzell, Forest Plan Revision Team Leader

NEWZ Plan Revision

# Why you should be involved

- Forest Plan Revision Proposed Action public
- □ June 30 to September 28, 2011

"Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

- Forest Service Mission

NEWZ Plan Revision

#### What Plans Do...

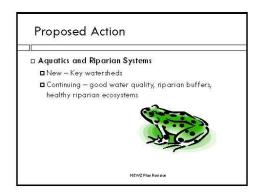
- □ Describes desired
  - Habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and plants
  - Vegetation (trees, shrubs, range lands)
- □ Identifies areas suited for kinds of travel
  - $\hfill \square$  on foot, motorized, or mechanized
- □ Recommend wilderness, determine eligibility of wild and scenic rivers
- □ Provide sideboards for projects
  - standards and guidelines

NEWZ Plan Revision

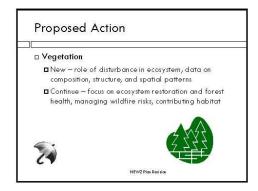
## **Attachment 1: Presentation Slides**

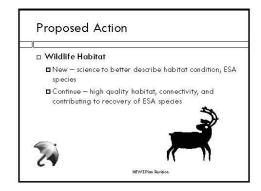




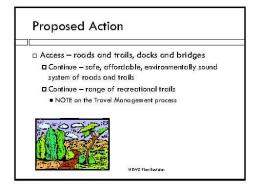


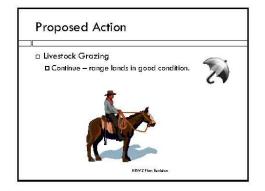


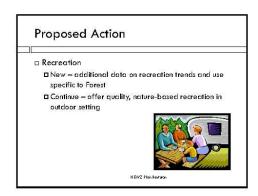




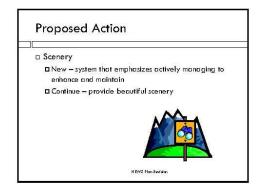
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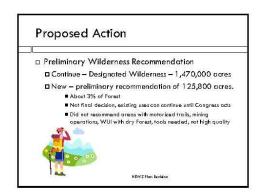












## **Attachment 1: Presentation Slides**

# Proposed Action Tool the plan uses - Management Areas Consistent with neighbors Habitats move New congressionally created trail - Pacific Northwest National Scenic

#### Commenting

- □ Today gather information, ask questions
- □ Tomorrow Send us comments specific to the proposed action, on-target, thoughtful
- □ Use comments to build options (alternatives) for



NEWZ Plan Revision

#### How to Comment

- □ Send comments to:
- Forest Plan Revision
- Okanogan Valley Office
- 1240 Second Avenue South Okanogan, WA 98840
- □ Email: r6\_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us
- □ Website: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision

Comments are most helpful if received by September 28, 2011.

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#### Discussion Groups

To enable focused discussion on specific topics of interest.

- □ Three 20-minutes discussion sessions
- $\hfill\Box$  Four discussion topics (choose up to 3 of these):
- □ Join wherever there is an empty chair
- $\hfill \square$  Please visit each group only once
- □ Flip chart notes will capture the nature of questions and comments -- NOT a substitute for your written comments.

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#### **AQUATICS AND WILDLIFE HABITAT**

- C: The plan should mention wildlife habitat limitations that the land can support.
- C: The transfer of wildlife (wildlife using habitat) should be monitored.
- C: Identify forest health in the plan; define what constitutes forest and riparian "health."
- C: Concern about wildlife overpopulation effect on vegetation
- Q: What does the Forest Restoration Strategy involve?
- C: Concern about managing for only one species
- C: Concern about management of habitat induced effect to other habitats
- C: Concern about fire management effects to habitat (i.e., Sawtooth Range)
- C: Concern about big horn sheep grazing
- Q: What is the extent of Wenatchee / Wilderness areas?
- Q: What are game / wildlife quantities?
- Q: What is the importance of replacing culverts (especially increasing in size)?
- Q: What is the funding source for management of new acreage?
- Q: If Congress acts and adds new land, will Wilderness lands likely expand again in the future?

#### **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**

- Q: Will you explain the acronyms (MPB, SBW, LPP)?
- Q: Did the Tripod fire of 2006 increase insect infestation?
- Q: What is the definition of "biomass?"
- Q: What is the economic value of biomass?
- Q: What is the definition of cogen plant?
- Q: Is there a cogen plant already in existence in the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest?

C/Q: Cattle grazing is impacting vegetation and creek banks. How is the Forest Service working to mitigate this impact?

Q: If the Forest Service is a steward of the forest, will it cleanup fallen logs?

C: The Forest Service oversees both problems – cattle grazing impacts and fallen logs.

Q: Are there existing allotment management plans for the Okanogan-Wenatchee? If so, who polices it?

Q: How does one contact the Forest Service to follow up on an allotment management plan?

Q: Is the Forest Service under the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture)?

C: There are many forest groups and acronyms.

C: We need to tell the Forest Service the exact location of concern. Noxious weeds (caused by motorized vehicles) are not food for cattle, yet the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) just suggests to put up a fence or to spray.

C: There is common sense in everything. What one person does affects others and vice versa.

C: New issues have emerged in the last 40 years. Loggers/miners/cattlemen were the original users of the forest. Now fences are being cut and destroyed, gates are left open. These are the actions of the new users.

Q: How will fuel be reduced given climate change and fires?

C/Q: 450,000 acres were lost in the 2006. What will eventually happen to them – fire?

Q: Will timber harvest be increased due to insect infestation?

Q: Is a late response to such potential harvesting due to governmental slowness?

Q: Where is prescribed burning? Why doesn't the Forest Service use it as much?

C/Q: Limited budget has slowed forest thinning and restoration. Can a prescription or treatment be used?

Q/C: Can environmental analyses done previously be used for planning? It was completed in the last 15 years.

C: Vegetation management needs monitoring. It is not robust in the forest plan. Some districts monitor more than others. Okanogan-Wenatchee needs much more monitoring. Creative uses of talent can be used, like local high school students participating in taking care of the forest.

C: Renewable resource management (e.g., grazing) not in the plan. We are being held at the status quo... which is actually a losing position.

Q: Does the Forest Service anticipate more funding for projects, or will it be year-to-year funding?

C: Use local resources for forest support. This will address budget issues. Workforce is local and idle.

C: Forest Service departments and fire departments need to collaborate and have discussions.

C: Long-term considerations are needed. Forest debris is left on the ground to burn later.

C: Are cogen plants profitable?

Q: What is new about this plan with regard to vegetation management? Grazing? Will allotment management plans will have standards and guidelines for individual locations?

Q: How does the budget system and process work?

Q: Is the fire fund a line item or a bucket of funds?

Q: Are economic impacts to local communities being considered in the new forest plan?

C: An economic analysis of climate change should be done.

C: Ripped up roads are causing many weeds. Let nature take the road back.

Q: Was the Twisp River insect spray last year successful?

Q: Do insects return after burns?

Q/C: Can timber be harvested after a fire? The Forest Service hasn't been doing this. Seems like a slow decision process delays action, and timber ends up rotting.

Q: Do infested trees cause increased fire risk?

Q: What is the worst insect, in terms of damage?

C: In the Loomis area, trees have been killed from infestation. There are some who want to keep this forest for old-growth timber.

Q: What is the time frame of infested timber viability? When do we need to act to harvest timber before it rots?

Q: In its natural cycle, won't insects just survive through infestation and continue to eat new growth after the forest is destroyed?

Q: Does the Forest Service believe infested trees should be left alone?

Q: What does "stocking" mean?

Q: Where do bugs come from? Why do they get so bad?

Q: Didn't the Forest Service plant Ponderosa Pine?

C: Aspen is not as prolific as in the past.

C: Fire suppression costs a lot of money.

#### WILDERNESS RECOMMENDED

Q: Can you clarify which areas are being proposed/recommended?

 Q: What portion is being administrated by Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest?

C: I am opposed to any more Wilderness. I want to use it is being as used now. We need chainsaws to maintain trails.

C: I agree with the county commissioners – no more Wilderness. Consider the economic impact to the area.

o C: Also, public access is restricted, particularly for those with physical limitations.

Q: What is the number of acres being added to Pasayten?

C: Break out acres by area (post on web, send out if requested).

Q: Is Birch Mountain being recommended for Wilderness?

C: Concerned about conversations with county commissioners:

 Need to articulate better why these areas should be designated – the "science" that the Forest Service is using.

C: I recommend that the Forest Service "market" its ideas (e.g. about biology/ science) to help people understand the reasons behind the recommendations.

"National forests" – "national perspective."

C: Communicate what the public is doing (local and others: volunteers maintaining, etc.) to help keep areas open and accessible.

C: Wilderness area maintenance can be an opportunity for at-risk youth.

C: Let people know the percentage of people from special interest groups that want Wilderness.

C: You should post NVUM (National Visitor Use Modeling) numbers to the web.

Q: Show and name recommended Wilderness areas (locations).

C: Most areas are pretty remote – not in mainstream of any current economic activity.

C: Wilderness proposals "keep the Forest Service in business." Wilderness impacts my motorized recreation use/ access.

C: I don't see that Wilderness designation addresses "market" of those using forest (age 65 and older).

Q: What are economic benefits of Wilderness?

C: It feels like Wilderness proposals will continue – and keep adding acres.

C: The Wilderness proposals feel discriminatory – particularly related to access.

Q: What is the number of people who use the Pasayten [Wilderness Area]? What percent day hike?

C: I like to use Wilderness; day use seems to be much more than what is found 15 miles back.

Q: Of 125,000 new acres, what has been going on in them? Current use? Grazing permits? How has it been affected?

C: Once land is designated Wilderness, we are "stuck."

- One example: firefighting efforts. If there is a fire in Wilderness, you can't salvage the trees.
- Also, it bothers me that I can't use motorized things.
- Q: Could you make fire retardant drop in Wilderness?
- C: There is not a lot of difference between Backcountry Non-Motorized and Wilderness.
- Q: What is the need for new Wilderness?
  - Why not just leave as Backcountry Non-Motorized (or eventually Backcountry-Motorized)?
- Q: Are there different costs for maintaining/ managing the different designations?
- C: Seems like it would be more expensive to graze livestock in Wilderness.
- C: Volunteers maintaining trails would like to see Backcountry-Motorized areas have recurring/easier agreements for groups who volunteer (specific).
- C: Backcountry-Motorized say something in Forest Plan about volunteer maintenance sideboards "more seamless agreements."
- Q: Are lights and noise taken into consideration when recommending Wilderness?
- Q: Is logging allowed in Backcountry areas?

#### **RECREATION ACCESS**

- C: Concern related to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access to Wilderness (equal opportunity to access see 504).
- Q: Interest in actual numbers (use) in Wilderness areas versus non-Wilderness.
- Q: Why do we need more Wilderness when there is so much existing?
- C: Concern about coordination between travel management and Forest Plan (places motorized use is allowed)
- C: Concern about road decommissioning and spread of weeds and closing of access to horse, bike leave the surface intact (keep opportunity for trail use)
- C: Concern about adequate fire access

- C: Concern about adequate ATV (all-terrain vehicle) opportunities in Methow Valley and ability to drive an ATV on Forest Service roads (dual use). I would like more of it.
- C: Concern backcountry contains roads (forest system and unauthorized)
- Q: Why is a good gravel road closed and an open road is in poor maintenance?
- Q: Why are we on a downward trend of miles of roads open to the public?

# Attachement 3—Forest Service and Faciliation Team at Meeting

Forest Service Staff		
Name	Forest	City, State
Christian Baumann	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Tonasket, WA
Roland Giller	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Wenatchee, WA
Margaret Hartzell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Marcie Johnson	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Tonasket, WA
Debbie Kelly	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Mike Liu	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Winthrop, WA
Mark Loewen	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Andrea Lyons	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Entiat, WA
Carol Ogilvie	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Tonasket, WA
Dale Olson	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Tonasket, WA
Mary Scholz	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Lisa Therrell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Victoria Wilkins	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Winthrop, WA
Stuart Woolley	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Wenatchee, WA

Facilitation Team			
Name	Affiliation	City, State	
Caylen Beaty	EnviroIssues <sup>1</sup>	Seattle, WA	
Susan Hayman	EnviroIssues	Boise, ID	
Kerston Swartz	EnviroIssues	Seattle, WA	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Neutral public process outreach and facilitation company (<u>www.enviroissues.com</u>) working under the auspices of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (<u>www.ecr.gov</u>).